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Our exposure to Grandparents Raising Grandchildren began in July, 2005. My daughter had separated from her husband, the girls stepfather, and moved out leaving the two girls and her almost one year old son in the care of her husband. Less than a month passed and soon to be ex-hubby lands in jail, and being a registered violent offender and this being his third offense since he was released from pre-release, we all figured hubby was headed back to prison. My daughter had no place to stay of her own and certainly no place to keep the children so my grandson was placed with his paternal aunt and the girls mother brought the girls to me.

I had worked full time for Wal-Mart for four years, had a pension plan, profit sharing, longevity pay, health and life insurance. I had two years prior met and married my soul mate, who was also employed at Wal-Mart. We had our schedules worked out so that we could ride in together, eat lunch together and go home together. We didn't have much but we treasured our time together.

I had to take a one year leave of absence in order to take care of the girls, losing approximately \$1000.00 a month in income. I had to get the girls into counseling, for they have both been sexually molested at their daycare, and are diagnosed as having Reactive Attachment Disorder, PTSD. Chronic and severe, Severe Abuse and Neglect, chronic and severe, poor social functioning and the eldest also has Seizure Disorder. I had to juggle their school schedules and therapy schedules and adjust to becoming a mother again. A mother with two very angry grandchildren, who directed all that anger towards me. My poor husband had no intention on raising any more children either, but God love him, here he is, right beside me.

My husband, continued to work full time to try to keep our heads above water, until he had to take medical leave of absence in April 2006. He has had four surgeries this past year and it doesn't look like he is going to be able to return to work, but come on, he is 74.

I approached the Office of Public Assistance and discovered that I qualified for TANF and Medicaid. My TANF payment is \$353.00. That and my husband's social security and Food Stamps is what we have to live on. By the end of the month we need to rely on the Food Bank and cancel all unnecessary driving. That means the girls can't go into town for their sexual trauma therapy. Luxuries at our house include garbage service and dial up Internet. Thank God for Medicaid, because my eldest granddaughter takes between \$800.00 and \$900.00 a month in medications. Both girls have therapy three times a week

and the eldest child works with the counselor at school. If we didn't have Medicaid these kids could not have any therapy and realistically would never have a chance at having a some what normal life.

I have filed a Social Security claim for both children and both children have been denied three times and have been scheduled for an Social Security hearing some time in the next year. However, yesterday I went around Stevensville trying to find a Notary Public that would notarize my signature so we can seek legal representation in the Social Security cases. None of the Notaries that I spoke with would honor the signed and notarized statements that I have from each parent giving me custody and guardianship of the girls and declined to allow me to get the document notarized.

We wanted to adopt the children but discovered that we would lose all our TANF and Medicaid. Additionally, the girls would not qualify for their own Social Security Disability cases, and they need this help desperately.

The girls parents had agreed to terminate their parental rights so we could seek kinship care for the children. We found out that won't work because the children were not removed by the State. Their mother has suspected undiagnosed borderline personality disorder. There are many many days she can barely function for herself. And, she is an exotic dancer and keeps very strange hours. Their father is unstable to the point that he came to Missoula to be near the kids, sponged off us and slept on our couch for two months, told the children he would never leave them again and a week later disappeared and we have not heard from him in eight months. He does not keep in contact with his family.

Child Support Enforcement doesn't seem to ever locate income from either parent to help us raise these kids. Even if the parents did both pay child support we would only get our TANF and an additional \$100.00 rebate check. Last time I knew my daughter owed almost \$5000.00 in back child support and the dad must owe many thousands of dollars.

For the life of me I do not understand why the State of Montana would rather pay several thousand dollars a month to a stranger to take care of my grandchildren, but I can only get \$353.00 a month. What can a stranger give my grandchildren that I can't, except the niceties that go along with have enough money to properly raise two children. Their future depends on this! And, I'm the one who should be making sure those babies are safe at night, have enough to eat, clothes for their growing bodies and as much love, patience and understanding as I can lavish on them.

Please help me help them. I can be reached at the above referenced numbers. I would gladly speak with you for any questions you might have. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Rae and Ford Lund